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CHAPTER II

PREVIOUS NEGRO MOVEMENTS

Among the many who have written concerning this exodus one finds that not a few of them have been prone to emphasize the fact that in this recent movement the Negroes suddenly developed within themselves a desire to move, thus implying that migration is not controlled by certain economic and social laws, and that this movement was an entirely new social phenomenon. Disregarding for the present the first assumption, and directing attention to the second, the writer holds that the latter must have sprung from the fact that no account was taken of the past economic and social history of the Negroes; for a study in that direction would have shown that ever since the time of their emancipation the Negroes have shown a tendency to migrate.⁹ That this has been the case a number of instances will demonstrate.

Shortly after emancipation there occurred slow and confused movements of the Negro population which covered a period of several years. During his enslavement the Negro could hardly do anything without the will and consent of his master; he had not the liberty to order and direct his life as he chose. When, therefore, he was suddenly transformed from this state to that of freedom, the first thing he did was to put this freedom to test by moving about. Consequently he drifted from place to place and at the same time changed his name, employment, and even his wife. Many also devoted much of their time to hunting while they were awaiting Federal Government assistance in the form of land and mules. Emancipation meant to them not only freedom from slavery but freedom from responsibility as well. Thus during their early years of

⁹ Scroggs, W. O., *Jour. Pol. Econ.*, 25: 1034, Dec., 1917.

liberty large numbers of Negroes moved about almost aimlessly and thoughtlessly and made their way especially to the towns, cities and Federal military camps.¹⁰

There was, moreover, a considerable movement of the Negro population toward the southwestern part of the United States. It was very slow and was in operation between 1865 and 1875, when the expansion of the numerous railway systems gave rise to a great number of land speculators who did much to induce men to go West and settle on the land. Their appeals greatly aroused the Negroes who had reasons for a change of abode. This movement was at first composed of individuals; but later on it became a group movement. In this migratory stream which flowed southwestward were 35,000 Negroes, who came largely from South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.¹¹

Again, in 1879, a large number of Negroes made a rush to Kansas.¹² This movement was due for the most part to agricultural depression in parts of the South, but was precipitated greatly by the activities of a host of petty Negro leaders who had sprung up in all parts of the South during the Reconstruction period. This exodus began early in March and continued till May. The estimated number of migrants was between 5,000 and 10,000; but there were thousands of others who had planned to migrate, but were deterred from doing so because of the news of the misfortunes which befell those who actually moved. The majority of those who left the South were from Louisiana and Mississippi. In this migration the Negroes left their homes when the weather was growing warm, but on reaching their destination found that spring had not yet arrived, the country being still bleak and desolate. Most of them were poorly clad and without funds. Consequently, many suffered from want and disease and consequently became public charges. As soon as it was convenient for them, however, large numbers returned to their homes where they

¹⁰ Woodson, C. G., *A Century of Negro Migration*, pp. 117-20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-21.

¹² Scroggs, W. O., *Jour. Pol. Econ.*, 25: 1035-37, Dec., 1917.

scattered such discouraging reports that others who had planned to move declined to do so. Nevertheless, about a third of them remained in Kansas and of this portion a fairly large number attained a creditable degree of prosperity.

The years of the later eighties and the early nineties also witnessed a few small interstate movements of Negroes.¹³ For a long time it was the custom of employers in the mineral districts of the Appalachian Mountains to hire only foreign labor to do their work, but during the time just referred to this labor failed to satisfy the demand. In order to meet this emergency the employers at once dispatched their agents to different parts of the South to appeal to the Negroes for their labor. The efforts of these agents were not without effect, because many Negroes soon flocked to the mining districts of Birmingham, Alabama, to those of East Tennessee, and to those of West Virginia. Also, large numbers went to southern Ohio, where they were employed in the places of white laborers, who were on a strike, demanding higher wages.

As is evident in the preceding citations, the Negroes of the South are inclined not only to move to the North and West, but are also prone to move about freely within the South. This can be further substantiated by a brief study of the interdivisional movements of the Negro population of the South. In 1910, according to the Federal Census, it was found that 1.4 per cent of the Negroes living in the South Atlantic Division, 5.8 per cent of those residing in the East South Central Division, and 13.1 per cent of those in the West South Central Division, were born in places outside these respective sections. On the other hand, it was shown that the South Atlantic Division registered a loss of 392,927 from its Negro population, the East South Central a loss of 200,876, whereas the West South Central Division revealed a net gain of 194,658 in its Negro population. Thus, while two divisions lost, the third gained

¹³ Woodson, C. G., *A Century of Negro Migration*, p. 146.

heavily by interdivisional Negro migration.¹⁴ This tendency toward interdivisional migration on the part of Negroes is, however, exhibited in a less degree than is the case on the part of whites. In 1910, 16.6 per cent of the Negroes had moved to other States than those in which they were born, whereas 22.4 per cent of the whites were found in States other than those in which they were born.¹⁵

Likewise, the Negroes are inclined to move about freely from section to section within the bounds of the North and West. In 1910, 47 per cent of the Negroes living in the New England Division, 52.3 per cent of those in the Middle Atlantic Division, 50.4 per cent of those in the East North Central Division, 32.1 per cent of those in the West North Central Division, and 80 per cent of those living in the Mountain Division and 77.7 per cent of those living in the Pacific Division, were born, in each case, in places outside of these sections.¹⁶ Each section showed also a loss of a certain per cent of its total native Negro population through migration to some other division. In this respect, New England showed a loss of 18.5 per cent, the Middle Atlantic States a loss of 10.5 per cent, the East North Central 16.2 per cent, the West North Central 18.2 per cent, the Mountain 43.9 per cent, and the Pacific 26.4 per cent.¹⁷ While this was the case, each division, nevertheless, received in turn, through migration from other places, enough newcomers to show a decided gain in its total Negro population. These gains in numbers were as follows:¹⁸

New England	20,310	West North Central	40,479
Middle Atlantic	186,384	Mountain	13,229
East North Central	119,649	Pacific	18,976

While much of the Negro migration has been interdivisional movements within the three major sections of this

¹⁴ *Negro Population in U. S., 1790-1915*, Bureau of Census, pp. 69-70.

¹⁵ *Journal of Pol. Econ.*, 25: 1040, D. '17.

¹⁶ *Negro Population in U. S., 1790-1915*, Bureau of Census, pp. 69-70.

¹⁷ *Negroes in the U. S.*, Bulletin 129, p. 17. Census Bureau.

¹⁸ *Negro Population in U. S., 1790-1915*, Bureau of Census, pp. 69-70.

country, yet a very considerable amount of it has been directed from the South to the North and West. Between 1870 and 1910, a period of forty years, there was a marked increase in the number of Negroes who were born in the South but who had migrated to the North. In 1870 the number was 149,000, but in 1910 it had increased to 440,534.¹⁹ This latter estimate is undoubtedly much less than the actual number of migrants, for it does not account for those who might have died or returned to the South or elsewhere before the taking of the Federal Census. Moreover, it is a fact that since the Civil War the Negro population of the North has been increasing faster than that of the South. In 1860 there were 344,719 Negroes in the North; in 1910 there were 1,078,336, an increase of 212.8 per cent for the fifty years' period. In 1920 there were 1,472,448 Negroes in the North, an increase of 43.8 per cent in ten years. In the West there were 78,591 in 1920. In the South, on the other hand, during the period from 1870 to 1910, the rate of increase was only 111.1 per cent. From 1910 to 1920 there was an increase of only 1.9 per cent whereas there was between 1900 and 1915 an increase of 10.4 per cent in that section in the Negro population in the South. During the past fifty years, therefore, the relative increase of Negroes in the North has been more than double that of the Negro population in the South. Before 1860 every census, except that of 1840, showed a greater relative increase in the Negro population of the South than in that of the North. Since that time, however, this condition has been reversed.²⁰ This increase of the Negro population in the North is undoubtedly due to migration from the South, and not to natural increase, because the vital statistics of Northern communities show that the Negro birth-rate is barely sufficient to balance the death-rate.²¹

Not only have Negroes been moving from the South to the North and West, but they have also been migrating

¹⁹ *Negro Population in U. S., 1790-1915*, Bureau of Census, p. 65.

²⁰ Scroggs, W. D., *Jour. Pol. Econ.*, 25: 1038, D. '17.

²¹ *Ibid.*, D. '17.

from these latter sections to the South. Immediately after the Civil War a small number of Negroes left the North and made their way to the South.²² This movement was composed of intelligent Negroes who had been fortunate enough to enjoy some of the educational opportunities of the North and who, because of this equipment, felt that they might be of service to the race during the Reconstruction period in the South. They were the ones who became the antagonists of the Carpet-baggers—the arch-corrupters of the governments of the Southern States. There were, however, other reasons why these men went South. In the first place, some had found northern communities so hostile to them that their progress was impeded; in the next place, many desired to reunite with their relatives from whom they had been separated by their flight from slavery; finally, others moved in response to a spirit of adventure to enter a new field which offered opportunities of all sorts.

The Federal Census of 1910, moreover, furnishes evidence of Negro movement from the North and West to the South.²³ This report shows that during that decade 41,489 Negroes who were born in the North and West were living in the South. This migration from these former sections to the South, though less considerable in volume than the migration from the South, is, nevertheless, proportionately greater when considered in relation to the Negro population born in these two sections than the migration from the South when the latter movement is, likewise, considered in its relation to the total Negro population born in the South. Thus the 41,489 Negroes born in the North and West but living in the South in 1910 constituted 6.5 per cent of the total Negro population born in the North and West, whereas the 440,534 Negroes born in the South but residing in the North formed only 4.8 per cent of the total Negro population born in the South.

The fact that this recent Negro migration, as has been

²² Woodson, C. G., *A Century of Negro Migration*, pp. 123-4.

²³ *Negro Population in the U. S., 1790-1915*, p. 65.

stated, was a movement to the large cities and industrial centers of the North and West should give no occasion for surprise, because this has been in progress for more than three decades. During this period the Negroes have shown a decided tendency to flock to the large cities of the North and West, and also to those of the South. This is verified by the discovery that since 1880 nine cities of the North and West have shown considerable increase in their Negro population. These attractive cities thus popularized are as follows: Boston, Greater New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Cincinnati, Evansville, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis. The increase for these nine cities between 1880 and 1890 was about 36.2 per cent; between 1890 and 1900 it was about 74.4 per cent; from 1900 to 1910 about 37.4 per cent; and from 1910 to 1920 about 50 per cent. In the first decade the increase was more than three times the increase of the total Negro population; in the second it was more than four times as large; in the third the increase was nearly three times larger; and in the fourth nearly five times as large as the increase of the same population. Likewise, during the same period there was a great Negro influx to the larger cities of the South, but the rate of increase was less than that of the Northern cities. In fifteen Southern cities the percentage of increase was about 38.7 per cent during the first decade; during the second about 20.6 per cent; and from 1900 to 1916 the increase (based on figures for sixteen cities) was about the same as that of the preceding decades.²⁴

These numerous instances of previous Negro movements show that the recent migration is no new and strange phenomenon, that Negroes, like other elements of the population of the United States, have shown a tendency since their emancipation to move from place to place. This recent exodus was simply a part of a long series of movements which have been in progress for more than half a century. It is, therefore, much like the others and differs

²⁴ Haynes, G. E., *New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1916, II, 12: 1.

from them only in its immense volume. In the course of this migration, as we observed, the number of Negroes who moved to the North and West was probably a half million—a number which perhaps exceeds or certainly equals that which resulted from all other movements from the South to the North during a period of forty years. Herein alone, if such a view of it can be held at all, lies its strangeness and remarkability as a social phenomenon.